



**IT Alley**  
4742 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave SW #272  
Seattle, WA 98116-4553  
[www.italleypllc.com](http://www.italleypllc.com)  
[sales@italleypllc.com](mailto:sales@italleypllc.com)



Article by How-To Geek

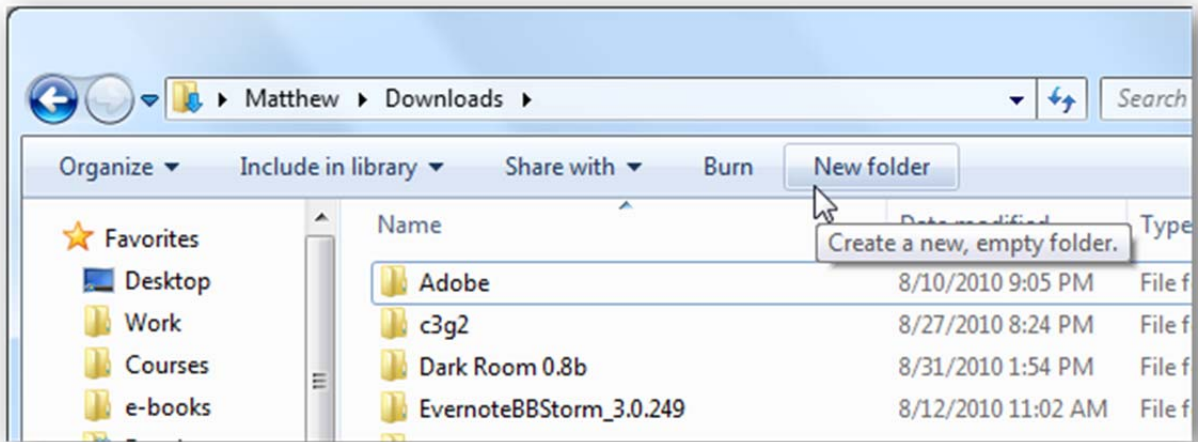
# How to Organize Your Programs in the Windows 7 Taskbar

Would you like to keep your programs neat and orderly in your Windows 7 taskbar? Let's look at an easy way to make your taskbar simpler and more aesthetic all at the same time.

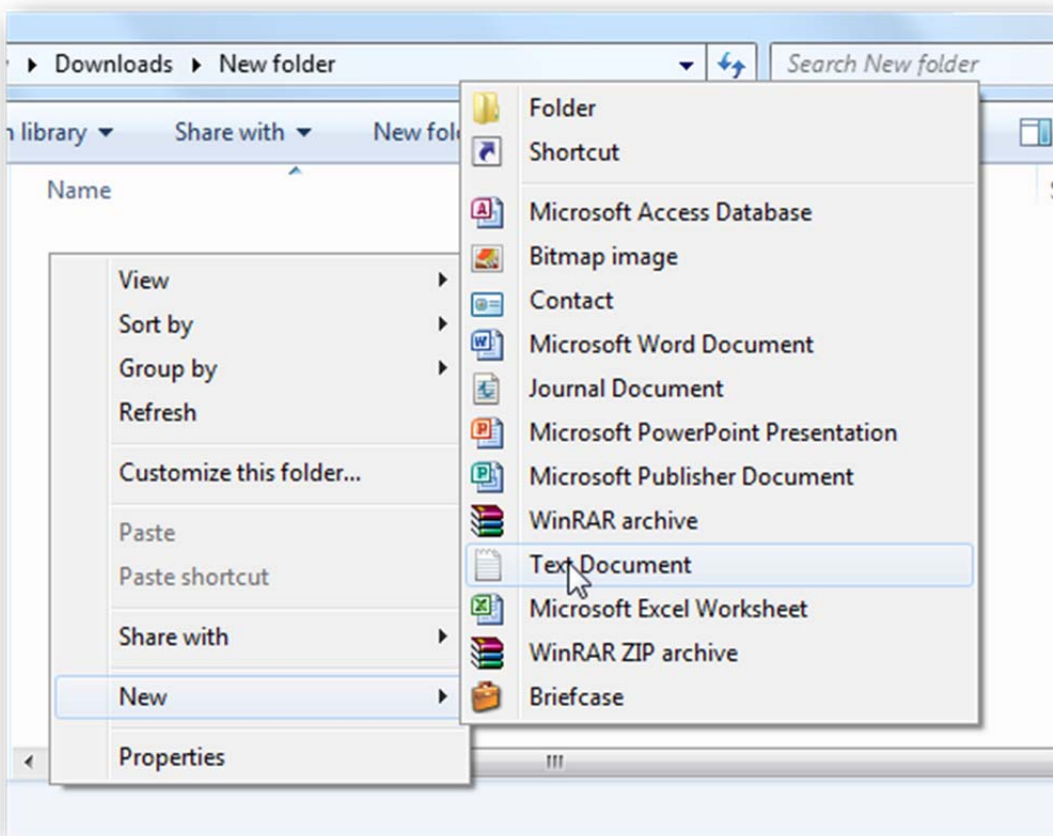
The Windows 7 taskbar makes it easy to have quick access to your favorite programs. With pinned applications, jumplists, and more, it's easier than ever to manage your applications from the taskbar without opening the Start menu. Unfortunately, it's also easy to get your programs in a mess where it's hard to find what you're looking for. Wouldn't it be nicer if you could sort your most-used programs into groups that made it easy to find the app you're looking for? Here's a quick trick that can help you regain control over your messy taskbar.



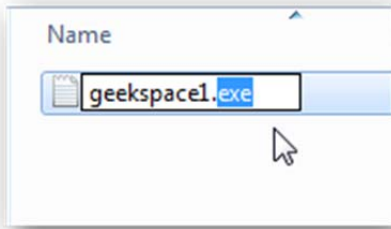
The Windows 7 taskbar lets you pin any application or shortcut to the taskbar, so we're going to use that to make spacer shortcuts to dummy applications so we can separate our programs into groups. First you'll need a folder to save your shortcuts and applications that you won't delete. We created a new folder in our Downloads folder, but you can save it wherever you'll easily remember not to delete it.



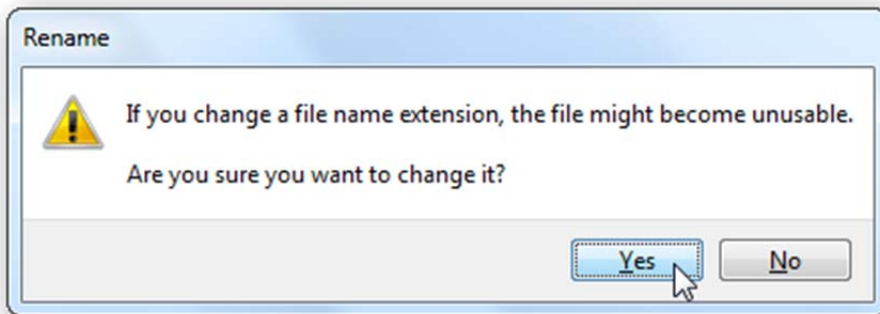
Now, in the folder, create a new text document or other file. You could create any new file here, other than a folder or shortcut.



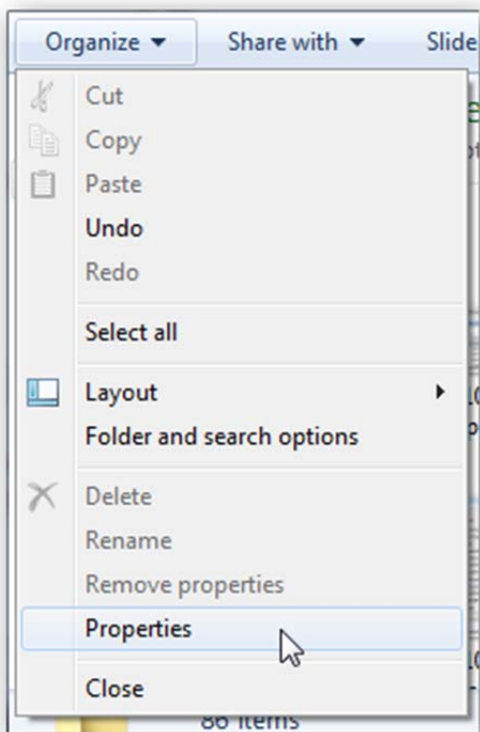
Change the name of the file to something unique, and then change the file extension to .exe.



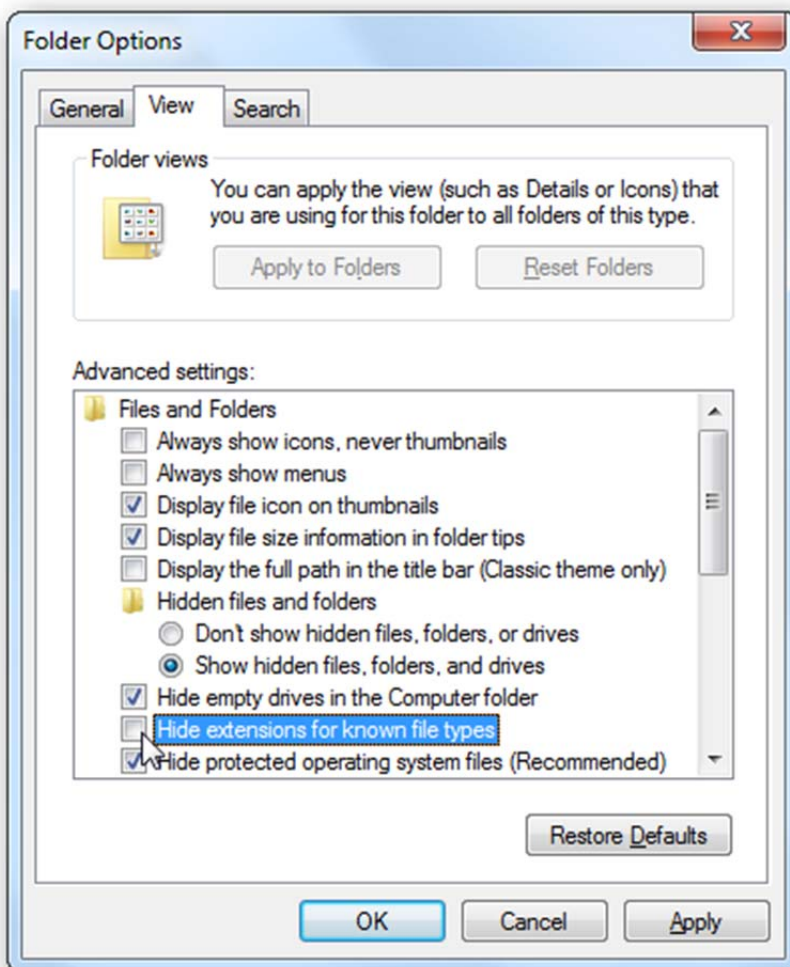
Windows will warn you not to change the file extension, but it's fine for this use. Click *Yes* to apply the changes.



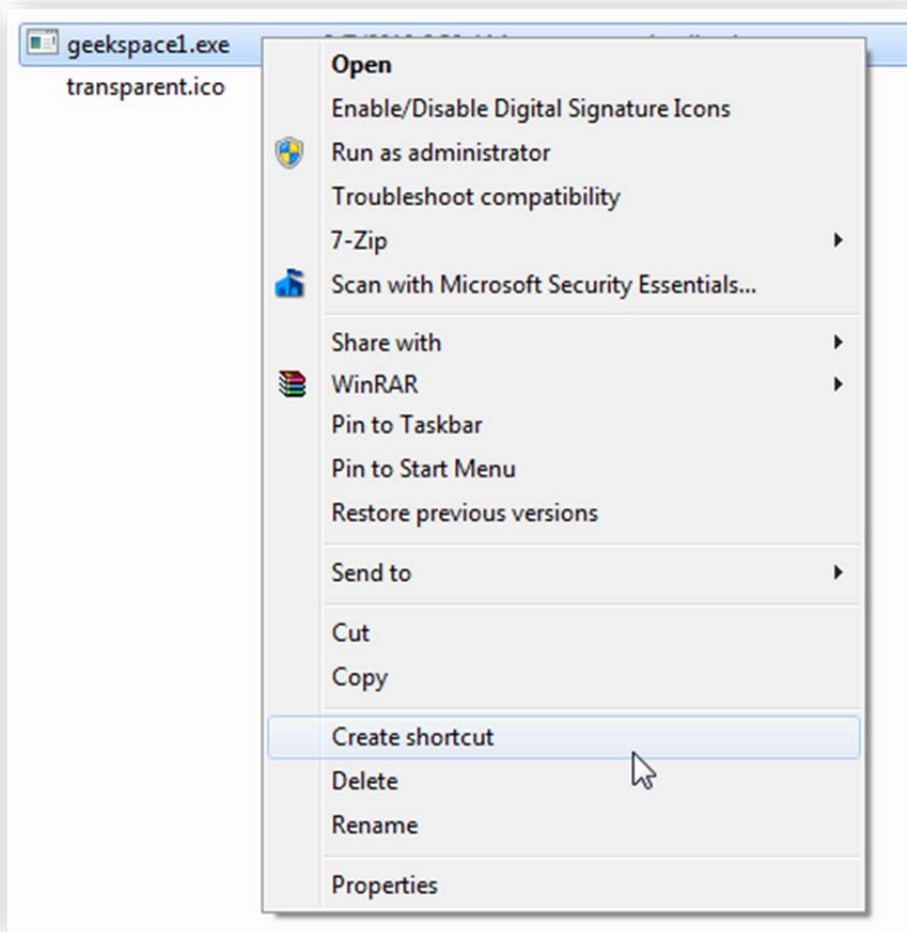
If you don't see the file extension listed, you may have your extensions hidden by default. To make them visible, click *Organize* on the top of the Explorer window, and select *Properties*.



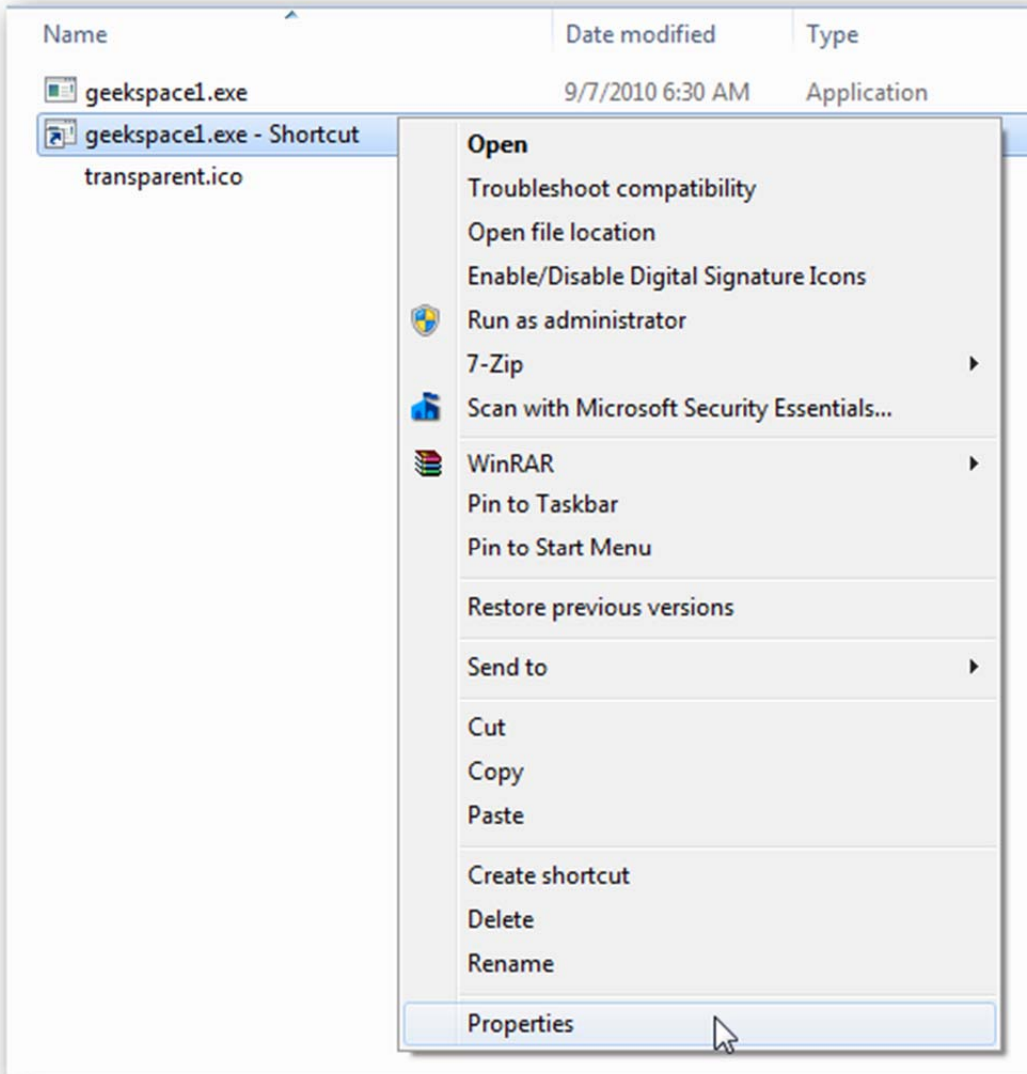
Select the *View* tab, and uncheck the box beside *Hide extensions for known file types*. Now click *Ok* to save the changes, and then change your file's extension as before.



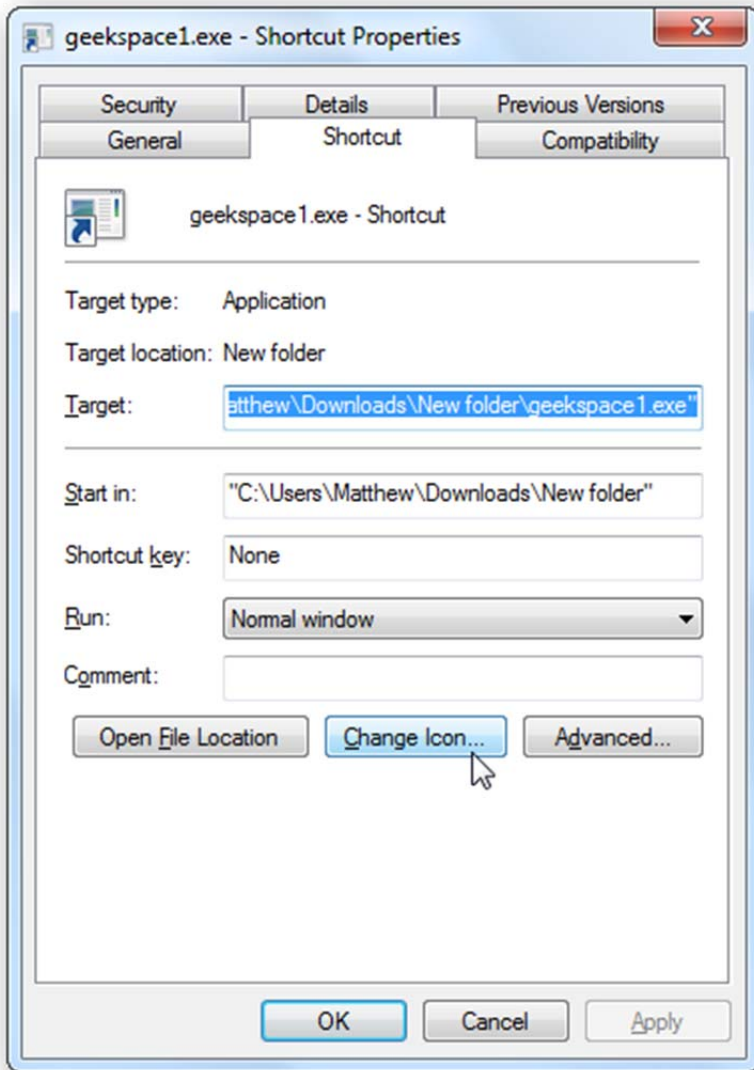
Now, we could just pin this fake application to the taskbar, but that wouldn't do us much good since it'd have the default application icon and wouldn't be much good for separating programs. Instead, we're going to create a shortcut to this app with a transparent icon. So, right-click on your new application, and select *Create Shortcut*.



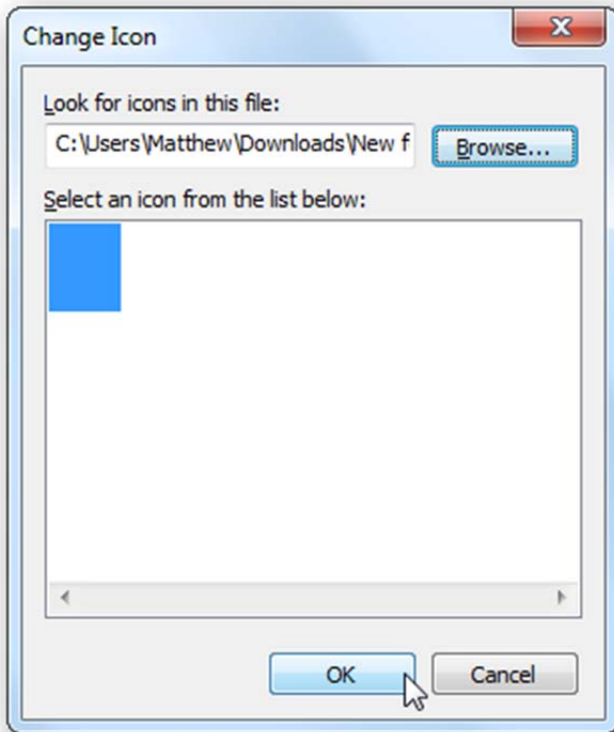
Now, we want to change the icon on the shortcut to a transparent icon so we'll have clear gaps in our taskbar to separate programs. You'll first need a transparent icon file; you can create your own, or download one we've created from the link below. Then, to change the shortcut's icon, right-click on the shortcut and select *Properties*.



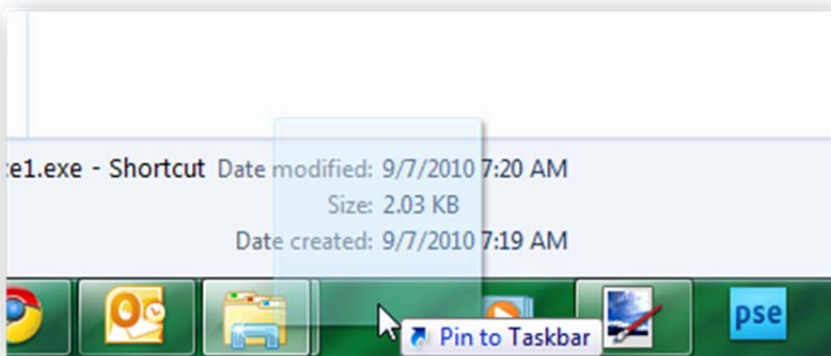
Select the *Shortcut* tab, and click *Change Icon*.








Browse to the folder where you saved the transparent icon, and select it as the new icon for this shortcut. Click *OK* to save the changes.



Once you're done, drag the new shortcut to your taskbar. You'll notice a new transparent gap between your applications.



Now repeat the steps to make extra fake applications and transparent shortcuts. You can make as many as you need to group your programs.

Name	Date
 geekspace1.exe	9/7/2010 6:30 AM
 geekspace1.exe - Sh...	9/7/2010 7:19 AM
 geekspace2.exe	9/7/2010 6:30 AM
 geekspace2.exe - Sh...	9/7/2010 7:22 AM
 transparent.ico	9/7/2010 7:17 AM

Once you've got all your spacers made, drag them and your programs around to get them into neat groups. You could group your Office, Creative Suite, browsers, or other programs together so they're easy to find.



Here's our full taskbar, with several groups of our most-used applications. Now it's always easy to grab the program you want with one click! Do note that you'll be limited by the number of icons you can fit on your screen, so be creative and get your top icons down where you can easily grab them.



If you switch to small thumbnails in the Windows 7 taskbar, you'll be able to fit even more applications.



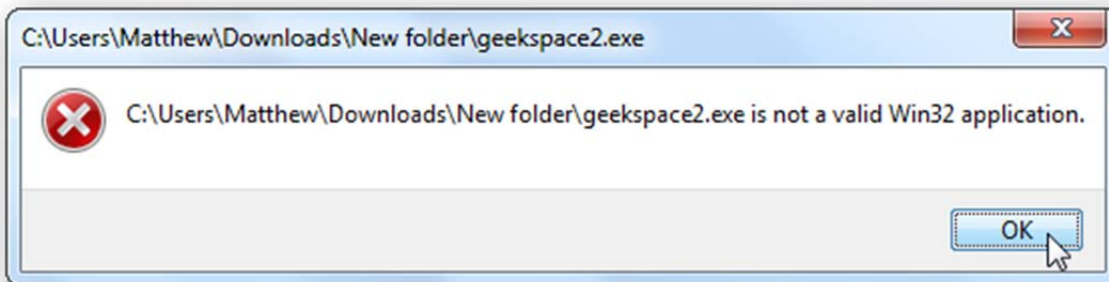
Alternately, you could make your taskbar thicker to show more icons. To do this, right-click on the taskbar and un-check *Lock Taskbar*. Now drag the top of the taskbar up to make it taller. Now even users with dozens of favorite apps should find a place for them all.



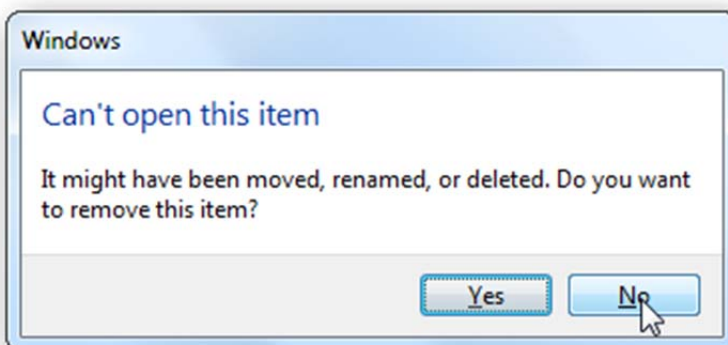
You could even give your app groups names. Simply change the shortcut's name before dragging it to the taskbar, and then place it with the appropriate program group. This might be helpful if you're setting up a computer for someone that has trouble recognizing icons.



Do note of course that these shortcuts are actually links to a program that's not a real program. If you accidentally click on one, you'll be informed that it's not a valid program.



Windows will then ask if you want to remove the shortcut. Select *No* to leave it as before.



We've found this little trick to be a nice and convenient way to keep our applications in order. The Windows 7 taskbar already keeps up from using the start menu much, but with this level of organization it's even easier to use. If you'd like to do a similar trick on OS X, check [this article to see how to do it](#).

[Download a Transparent Icon for Your Shortcuts](#)

[Paint.NET Extension to create ICO files](#)